



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 13 August 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
13 AUGUST 1968

1. Czechoslovakia -
East Germany

Ulbricht made yesterday's trip to Czechoslovakia as short as possible, but much of it must have been painful to him even so. He ventured only as far as a Czech spa 12 miles from his East German sanctuary. His plane was met by a small, silent crowd. ("One person forgot himself and clapped," noted a US Embassy officer.) The people in town followed him with cries of "Long live Dubcek!" Dubcek and his lieutenants went out of their way to make sure Ulbricht was aware of the enthusiastic support the Czechs have been giving their leaders.

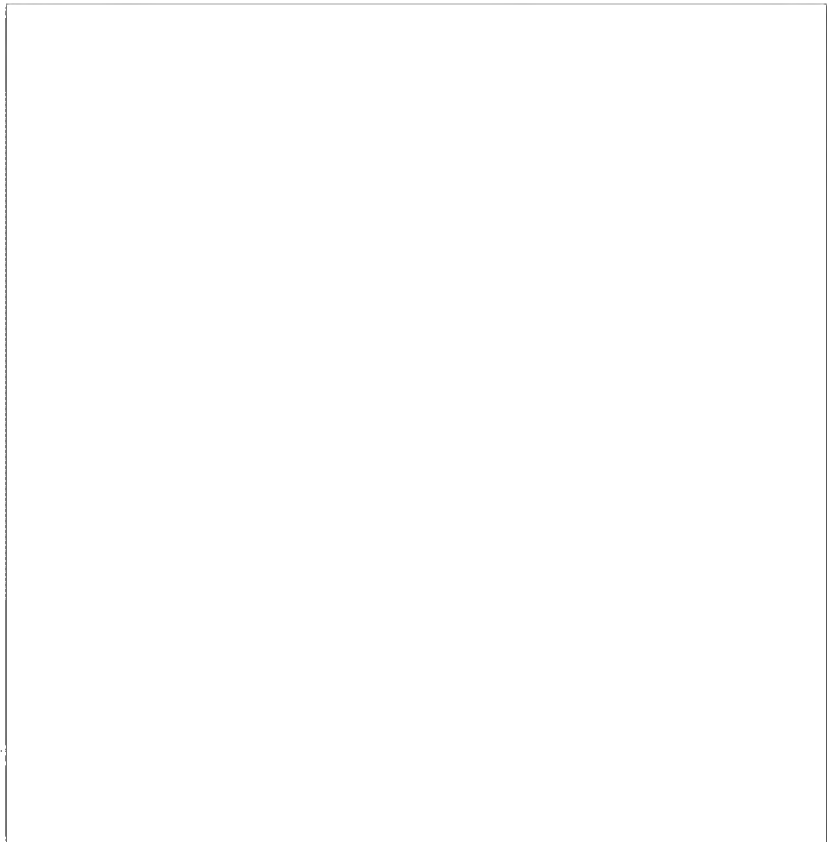
The East German and Czech delegations talked for seven hours yesterday, but we cannot conceive that they have anything useful to say to each other.

Ulbricht goes home today. A more congenial guest, Rumania's Ceausescu, is due in Prague on Thursday.

2. France

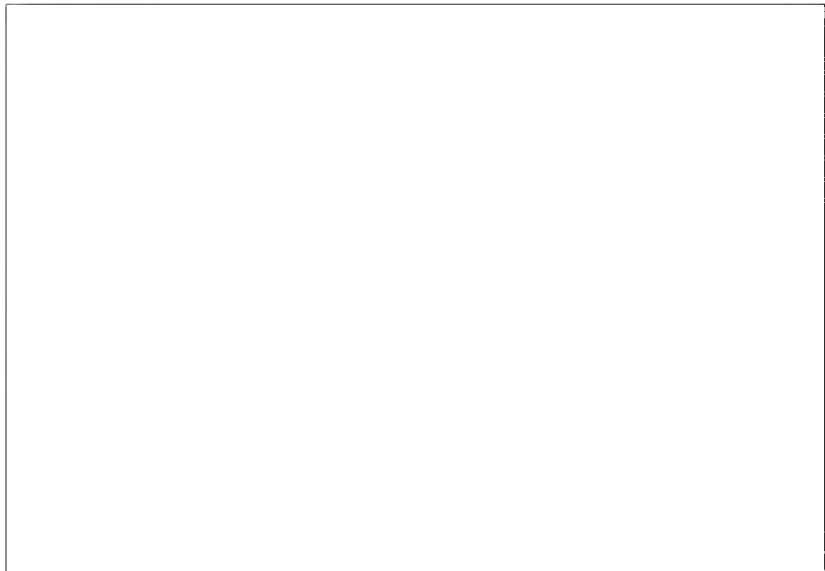
Couve de Murville was unusually forthcoming in discussing French domestic policies with Ambassador Shriver on Saturday. Couve's principal points are noted at Annex.

3. Nigeria



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4. Afghanistan



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ANNEX

Couve Discusses Domestic Policy

Couve de Murville gave Ambassador Shriver a preview of the government's domestic programs in a conversation on Saturday. Among the high points:

--France is in for more austerity. The next government budget will show a large deficit, and further tax increases are on the way. Tax credits will be granted for new investment, however.

--France will be moving out from behind its protectionist barriers, and the French will have to "accustom ourselves to the rigors as well as enjoy the advantages of an open economy." One bitter pill will be a higher unemployment rate.

--The educational system will be decentralized, and the government plans to involve professors, administrators, and students at each university in the process of reform. As a result the universities, which now are all cut to the same centuries-old pattern, will develop a diversity much like that in the US.

--Couve also foresees the growth of specialized schools and institutions similar to our junior colleges to take care of students who cannot be absorbed by the existing universities.

The economic measures Couve talked of are fairly orthodox, albeit a bit more international in orientation than De Gaulle's previous policies. Recent proposals from radical Gaullists--including De Gaulle's own vague promise that the workers would be permitted to participate in the management of their enterprises--were not mentioned by Couve at all.

Ambassador Shriver notes that Couve seemed to be making a special effort to seem forthcoming. Twice he prefaced his remarks with the statement, "Perhaps it is indiscreet for me to say this, but...."

At the end of their talk, Couve said he has "always believed in being completely frank and aboveboard." When the ambassador asked if there were any problems in Franco-American relations, Couve laughed and replied, "Everything's fine. We have no problems with the US."

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes

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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

13 August 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

North Vietnamese Propaganda Travels: A North Vietnamese delegation was scheduled to leave Cairo on 11 August for Sudan and a tour of Africa. In Cairo the delegation participated in the meetings of the preparatory committee for an international conference in support of North Vietnam. The conference, sponsored by the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, is planned for 7-9 September.

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Clarification: The North Vietnamese foreign ministry issued a note on 10 August clarifying what it called "distortions" of an interview Premier Pham Van Dong gave to a Filipino newsman recently.

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The foreign ministry said that the premier "reiterated the sacred right to self-defense of the entire Vietnamese people," and that all other interpretations are "ill-intentioned distortions." Hanoi continues to be unusually frank in discussing this issue, but clearly wishes to avoid going all the way and acknowledging that its troops are in the South.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL
ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

Hanoi on US Elections: North Vietnam has broken a long silence on the US election campaign by publishing an article in the army newspaper on 10 August.

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The article takes the same Marxist-Leninist approach General Giap used nearly a year ago in arguing that US elections were merely a capitalist farce and would not result in any change in US policy in Vietnam. This tack in the army newspaper probably is intended to caution military forces and the general populace that strenuous military efforts are still necessary and that no false hopes should be raised because of the Paris talks and the elections.

Such propaganda provides no clues to Hanoi's real attitude. The North Vietnamese leadership is intensely interested in this year's US elections. Even though for the past several months the subject has hardly been mentioned in Vietnamese Communist propaganda, North Vietnamese officials both at home and abroad have probed on the subject at every opportunity.

The new article is a fairly complete review of US election developments in the past few months. It has derogatory comments for all the leading personalities. Senator McCarthy is called a "second-rate politician with little experience or money," and the Kennedy, Humphrey and Rockefeller "cliques" are all upbraided for spending large sums of money.

The article comments that the Vietnam war has exerted a strong effect on the elections and claims that this is the first time such a foreign issue "has become decisive" in the US. It notes that the Republican platform "discoursed on the Vietnam problem," and pledged to "step up the peace talks" and to "avoid a fake surrender." Mr. Nixon, says the paper, has promised to settle the war through "peaceful talks," but still maintains his "aggressive design." The paper concludes by condemning both the Republican and Democratic parties and claiming that President Johnson argued against expanding the war during the 1964 campaign and then "immediately turned aside and reneged on his commitment."

This more freewheeling approach to the US elections was also introduced in Paris on 12 August when the spokesman for the North Vietnamese delegation told a news conference that Nixon's Vietnam policy was "impudent." The spokesman dismissed the Republican platform by saying it does not call for a full

bombing halt and the withdrawal of US forces. He also described as "inaccurate" Vice President Humphrey's declaration that peace is closer than at any time in the past. He added that "the Paris talks have so far failed to progress by one inch or one millimeter."

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Hanoi Quotes Senator Clark: Hanoi's press agency carried an item in English on 12 August saying that Senator Joseph Clark had concluded from a recent tour of South Vietnam that the war is a "stalemate."

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